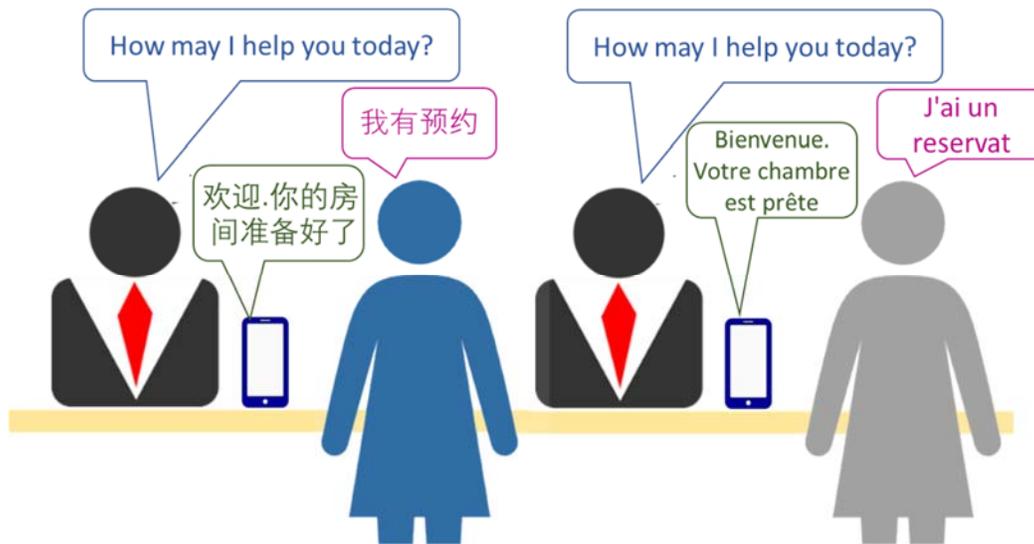


NATURAL LANGUAGE TRANSLATION APPLICATIONS

APRIL 2018 TECH BRIEF FOR RETAIL, HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM TALENT NETWORK



Translators can Help Salespeople Interact

Natural language translators have improved to the point where travelers can use them to communicate with shopkeepers in stores well beyond the tourist district. It stands to reason that the reverse could work as well:

- (1) Sales representatives using voice translation apps on mobile devices to welcome potential customers who don't speak English
- (2) Support staff who are non-native speakers can use voice and text translation apps to better understand requests and fulfill orders.

This second possibility might help broaden the pool of potential workers, particularly in shore communities and other areas where work is highly seasonal by nature.

Simultaneous voice-to-voice translation requires artificial intelligence (AI) at a highly sophisticated level. Very few companies have attempted this. Those that are moving in this direction have been achieving breakthroughs. Is having an instantaneous voice translator on your phone an augmented reality? If so, AR is here now.

Labor Force Takeaway

AI technology can assist workers and managers in the Retail, Hospitality and Tourism industries. Identifying and reviewing retail programs can shed light on the merit of these software applications and devices.

Using Mobile Apps that Translate Voice Conversation for Fun and Sales

According to a [Washington Post article](#) published in January, the UN predicts an upswing in international tourism. As part of their travels, some international tourists will likely visit NJ vacation areas. Consider this scenario. A couple walks along an ocean-side boardwalk and sees a welcome sign in their language. They wander into the shop. The international guests are looking at merchandise. The floor attendant greets them in English. Noticing the language barrier, he/she pulls out a translator. A light-hearted, conversation is started. This interaction is more likely to result in a sale and/or referral than is (say) awkward silence before someone move on.

Free mobile apps that receive positive reviews are [iTranslate Voice 3](#), [Triplingo](#), [Papago](#), [Microsoft Translator](#), [MyLingo](#) and [Google Translate](#). Taking this up a notch, there are also dedicated voice translation devices such from [Transay](#), [Pulomi](#) and [Anxuans](#). At a cost of less than \$300, translators could be a [worthwhile investment](#).

A similar experience could be remedied in a restaurant. Non-native speakers may have trouble reading a menu. Currently, for Asian languages, [Waygo](#), can be used to [translate food menus and signage](#). One needs to simply point their smartphone and read the translation; no Wi-Fi service required. Additionally, if a restaurant were to have a standard menu printed out in 15 different languages, the menu posted in the window could indicate the translations available. Translation programs for written languages [are so accurate](#), they can be trusted for [business](#). Consider [Babylon](#) or [Dragon Professional](#), among many others which can be standalone or enterprise.

Use of natural language translators could smooth language barriers with both customers and a workforce segment that has a primary language other than English.

Any industry seeking to hire for positions that have a high turnover rate may consider interviewing those for whom English is not their first language. Could AI be used to augment these potential employees? What if in the interview, they were handed a [translator](#) to use? Perhaps the ability to understand and answer questions in their native tongue would reveal personality traits indicative of the interviewee's potential. Company policy could dictate whether mediated conversations are to be used temporarily, occasionally or as part of normal business.

Cell phones are not normally allowed on the salesfloor, for good and sound reasons. Perhaps one solution would be to have a translator device on a stand affixed to the cash wrap counter. Or, perhaps the use of a radio transceiver can be used to ask the manager to bring over the store-cell-phone that has the app.

Gamification is much written about in tech news. Yet gamification has a dark and manipulative side when applied to software programs. Genuine, cheery human interaction can have the elements of play (i.e. games) without the dark side. Using a device to bridge the language gap, if used in a sincere way, may be accepted by the vast majority of people out for a day at the beach, park, or historic urban area.

Here is a chance to try augmented reality at low cost and low risk.